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THE MAYANS

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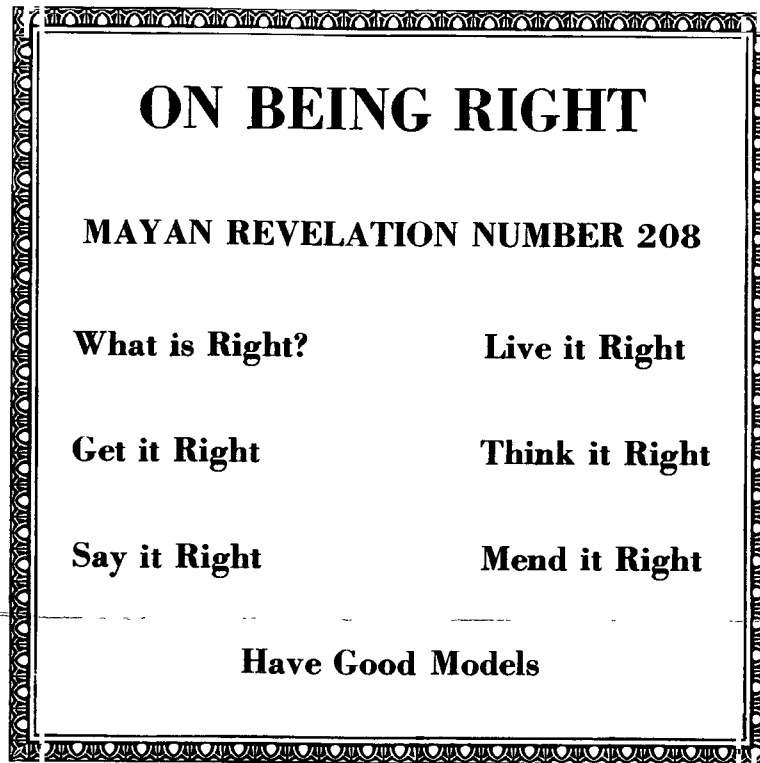
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BELOVED CENTURION:

It was the famous statesman, Henry Clay, who said, "I would rather be right than be President", and our beloved President Abraham Lincoln said, "Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let us dare to do our duty as we understand it."

This lesson takes up the study of RIGHT and what the correct understanding of it means in shaping our lives. Understanding its exact meaning and applying it to every department of your life can mean the difference between success and failure. And that is why the material in this lesson is very important. I would like you to study it carefully and to think about what it says. Don't just read it, but STUDY it.

All of us, some time in our lives, when doing some big thing or perhaps some little thing, have said, "Oh, I believe that's good enough for now - it will get by." Yes, it might "get by" and you probably would not be hurting anyone, but

you would not be true to yourself and it would be a destructive factor in that which you are trying to build. This is a natural and human thing to do, but it is very wrong.

It is so easy to form that habit in life, but it is something we should never do. The RIGHTNESS which we express in our actions is exactly the same as straightness of lines. There cannot be two kinds of right action any more than there can be two kinds of straight lines - they are right and they are straight, and nothing else is good enough.

Let me give you another little example:

When something in your home has needed repair, I am sure that many of you have said, "Let's take it to Mr. Brown. He is a little more expensive than Mr. Jones, but he does his work right." Mr. Brown has built up a reputation for rightness and, as a result, he is successful.

This lesson gives you many examples of the power that can be exerted in your life through doing everything right - in the manner of speaking, of thinking, of doing, of planning, even to the habit of trying to see and hear only those things that are right and from which you can benefit. There is so much of beauty in the world and, as your lesson will show you as you study it, we should learn to ~~screen out all of~~ that which is not beautiful and which is wrong. Some times that is difficult to do and it takes real will power and real understanding, about which you as a Mayan should be learning more all the time.

And now, since the lesson contains so many truths and a wealth of food for thought, we will pray that we gain the utmost from the teachings herein by repeating together the words of the following prayer:

PRAYER

I wait before Thee, Heavenly Father, to be shown a clear vision of what is meant by right, and how to attain and maintain it in my life. Amen.

WHAT IS RIGHT?

THE WORD right is a wonderful word. We could meditate long on it and yet hardly scratch the surface of its meaning. Here we will try at least to make a beginning on that contemplation. To absorb the meaning and power of that word into our concept of and program for living would be one of the most wonderful and far-reaching things we could do.

Our word right is a translation of a Latin word from which we derive also such words as rectitude, correct, and rectangle. A rectangle is, of course, a figure each of whose angles is a right, or ninety degree angle, and each of whose sides is therefore a straight line. In the meaning of the word right, then, is the idea of straightness. It is a straight and narrow way, for instance.

In the Bible the word right and the word just are interchangeable. Just, of course, means exactness, a thing done just so. A thing justly or rightly done is a thing exactly done. A just man is, then, one who exacts right, straightness, or precision from himself.

The word right may be applied to any and all matters of life, great and small. There are many wrong ways to do a thing, but only one right one, and this applies even to our attitudes and motives. It matters more whether one does right in dealing with others than whether he is careful to be right in his table manners or matching his ties, but they are all a part of the picture. In other words, the quality of rightness fits in anywhere with good effect.

In a certain city all the express trucks once had painted just inside where the driver would see it every time he went to load or remove a package, the slogan "Do It Right". It must have had a good effect on the express service in that place to hold such a standard before the workers, and it would surely be good for any of us to keep a similar motto hanging in a prominent place in our minds. We would see its reminder every time we go to think out a problem, or make a decision, or determine upon a purpose. How many problems it would solve; and better yet, how many problems it would prevent!

No more taking the easiest way, no more dodging responsibility, no more making excuses, no more being content just to get by, no more letting so-called well enough alone, no more shoddy work, no more half-baked results. Let hands, feet, brain, heart, tongue, and senses, exact correctness of themselves. Do it right.

After all, doing things right is about as easy as doing them wrong. When the results and rewards are taken into consideration it is easier. One has to go out of his way to bungle things. The natural thing is to do them well. Doing so avoids waste and conserves values too. It enriches the race because it raises the valuations of living.

GET IT RIGHT

HOW MANY regrettable happenings never get any better explanation than "I didn't understand" or "I didn't realize" or "I didn't think" or "If I had only known." You have heard them, so there is no need to dwell on them. What we will dwell on here is trying to get that story less often and tragically told. There is an antidote for that happiness-destroying heart poison. It is this, "Get it right."

Listen carefully to what you hear about people and things. If it isn't important, disregard it. If it has worth and meaning for you, register it in memory, perhaps even note it in writing. If it involves any other person, friend or enemy, or anything that may be of importance later, be sure you get it right so you can never use it in any wrong way.

You are likely not to do that if you listen carelessly, or hear with prejudice, or consider only one side, or assume that some fragment read or heard is the whole story. None of these ways is conducive to being right about anything.

They do the opposite. The consequences of them are unhappiness and misfortune that will harm others and most likely react negatively on you.

A certain man is in the habit of acquiring his knowledge of current events by reading newspaper headlines, and doing so only as he passes the paper racks on the street. That means that he only sees an unrepresentative flash about a few events, and takes no time to check them or even to get their complete meanings into his mind.

One day he thought he saw in passing a headline statement that a certain engineering and technical research firm was planning to erect a fifteen million dollar building on a certain spot. He told others who had no adequate conception of such things either. Results were a storm of material equipment salesmen descending on the firm, a call from the city hall and one from the people from whom it had leased the ground, demanding to know why it was planning a fifteen million dollar building when he had authority for only a million and a half one. In his hurry he had multiplied the headline figure by ten. It is as unfortunate as it is easy to do such things.

If you are going to report, or even believe a thing, get it right. Get into the habit of doing so as a matter of integrity. Don't even hide under some such uncertain guard as, "Now I just heard that. I don't know for sure whether it is true." That will not stop it from going the rounds gathering assumptions as it goes. Keep still about it till you get it right, then unless you have reason to report it, keep still about it anyway.

An old Arab proverb says always to ask ourselves three questions before making a statement -

is it true?

is it kind?

is it needful?

Be as careful of your facts as though you were taking an examination on them for grades at school. That is a habit that not only saves no end of trouble, but that also builds integrity. One should think too much of himself to be irresponsible in speech.

SAY IT RIGHT

IF PEOPLE would be careful what they say and how they say it the practice would not only be to their credit in the attractiveness of their speech and communication, but it would also save much friction, misunderstanding, and loss, occasioned by our not realizing what a wonderful blessing to us is our beautiful language and its proper use.

Think how limited a life it would mean to be dumb, to have no use of the vocal cords that are able to transfer thought and information from one mind to another through the ear and eye. But there is one thing that would be worse. It

would be having no language at all, for then thought could not even take intelligible form in our minds.

Our language, like all languages, began in very limited and elementary form. Many of its sounds come from times much farther back than its name, and its writing consists of letters that grew from pictures in times older than we know. The letter B is an abbreviation of Beth, a Hebrew word for house. D comes from a Greek letter Delta which was a triangle representing a tent door. M comes from the Hebrew letter Mem which was an ancient word for water, so we still see the waves in the written letter.

You see, words and letters are not just invented. They have histories and biographies just as people do, and when we misuse them and change them we break their family lines. There is a reason why words and sentences are so expressive. They started with ideas, and it took centuries to build them. A people's language should be kept sacred, and used rightly, because it is built for communication and is indispensable in living and getting on.

Out of ancient picture writings have grown many languages, all of them exactly built and put together by grammatical principles that make fine shadings possible and remove all doubt as to what the speaker or writer meant to say. In America practically all of us use the English language which combines the excellences of many of the others. To have such a language is our good fortune, for there is much about our native tongue to like and make it good to use. An old piece of verse used to be quoted which suggests why:

"The Greek's a harp we love to hear.
Latin is a trumpet clear.
Spanish like an organ swells.
Italian rings its silver bells.
Loud the German rolls his drum,
And Russia's clashing cymbals come.
But Britain's sons may well rejoice,
For English is the human voice."

Having the power and privilege of exchanging thoughts with one another, and having such a flexible language with which to do it, it seems the least we can do to respect this language, use it well, and guard it against corruption by misuse in slang, current jive talk, profanity, and incorrectness. Know enough about words and the rules for their use to let the language serve you. You will always be respected in serious company if you speak well and try to say things right. Here is a rule from an old textbook in Rhetoric: Express yourself not merely so you may be understood, but so you cannot be misunderstood."

LIVE IT RIGHT

EVERY WAY in which we do things right becomes a part of the larger pattern of life itself. We have noted that rectitude is going straight. In this case we are not referring to the path one walks in, but the way he lives. In living, as in walking, however, we save much time, energy, and chance of getting lost and thus failing to accomplish our purpose, by following the straight line,

which is always the shortest distance between two points.

In passing, consider another question. Have you noticed that anyone who wants to walk a straight line to a given point can do it best by keeping his eye fixed on that point as he goes? Many people have found that this is applicable in reaching anything at which we aim. Those who have reached excellence and success in their careers have done it that way, and so have those of us who have sought the lesser goals of everyday living. We have arrived anywhere much more directly if we kept our gaze centered on it as we went. Often in life someone says, "I never expected this, but I always wanted it and kept it in mind, and here it is dropped into my hands as it were." That is a perfectly natural happening, and a common one as well. Even when one does not really think he will ever attain a thing, as long as he keeps his attention on it he is really though unconsciously traveling in its direction.

Since it is a law of life that we tend to arrive wherever desire and attention have been fixed, how important it is that those goals, both greater and lesser, be really good. Let them be right goals, right for us and right within themselves. That is why one should be mortally afraid to harbor wrong thoughts and desires. It is a sobering fact that whenever one does so his life is moving in a straight line toward them. One should consider seriously whether he really wants the thing he thinks he wants, and whether he would continue to want it so much if he really had it, for he may rest assured that if he keeps holding it in mind long enough, he will probably get it.

If one is to translate a really right desire into manifested reality, the hope he sets before him such and such a distance on a straight line, his picture of it must be definite. A mother was downtown shopping with her little four year old son. At last he saw her prepare to start home without having bought anything for him. He protested thus, "Mother, I want a something." He probably had about everything on the market, but he didn't want to miss a chance to get something more, even though he had no choice to express. He got nothing because he didn't know what he wanted. They never find much who are only looking for "a something", and if they get "a something" it may not be the right thing at all.

Keep your soul looking at the definite thing you want to have, do, or be. Make sure it is right, for the path between you and it is straight. If it is good, and you reach it, the realization will be good. That is the way a master builder goes about the building of his life. It is also the way one becomes a master builder.

THINK IT RIGHT

WE DO not just make up our minds that our speech is going to be clear and creditable. Neither do we just decide that we are going to make it so, if that is all we propose to do. Even if we speak correctly, there still remains the matter of what we say. If that is not strong and worthwhile no matter of expressing it is going to make it worth listening to.

This is no empty comment, but one on a very important point. It refers to a difficulty many people have, and many of them go through the years wondering why

it is that so few people pay attention to what they say. One requirement, then, for saying things right is to think them right.

Some principles of Logic and the possible fallacies may help us in right thinking if we use our knowledge of them rightly and do not expect too much of them. The trouble with formal Logic is that it can be manipulated and used in such a way as to prove things that are not true. It will not even prove the truth unless it is carefully used, any more than a mathematical principle will get us the right answer if the slightest error has crept into the first factors used. Right thinking is not a science. It is the use of care in assembling evidence and drawing conclusions.

It is true anywhere that the person who does not jump to conclusions, or overdoes his statements, or rushes into needless arguments and discussions, but who shows that he thinks before he speaks, speaks with care, has all sides of the matter in mind, is just and fair, and then expresses himself in clear language that is not marred by bad grammar or wrong usage, is sure to be heard with respect and to exert influence by what he says. If he follows this habit he will be logical, whatever techniques he may use.

What we should be after in our thinking is a combination of truth and right, as is true in our speech. We cannot be too careful about keeping free of error or injustice of any kind, aside from intended humor or fun, of course. To accomplish this we have two necessary and wonderful tools - reason and language. As in the case of all tools we need to care for, cultivate, and use them, as the priceless instruments they are.

One of the ways to go about this is to listen to people and to notice what they say and how they say it. Some will be examples of how to do it, others of how not to do it. In the people around you, you can have a ready-made demonstration program before you every day.

The point at which most people fail, however, is in not listening to themselves. They think by assumption and talk by ear, and the result of neither does them any credit. Hear and read good thoughts well expressed, know how to test their forms and evaluate their meanings. Get the idea and practice the ways of the best models you can find.

There are many good minds that no one has recognized and that have not recognized themselves, because they have not tried to develop and use their methods in more than the most ordinary ways. Do not so let your light remain under a bushel. Keep it fit to have out on the lampstand where all may see and hear.

MEND IT RIGHT

EVERY JOB of any kind we do is subject to accident, failure, breakdown, and interruption. Our plans and efforts to live our lives are no exception. Broken hopes, plans, efforts, endeavors, and accomplishments - who has not heard, seen, and experienced one or another of them? Repair work at times becomes almost as important as construction work itself. This too needs the uniform standard we have been recommending for various areas of living. Mend it right.

Here is a great concrete and steel building going up on a certain street. It is apparent to all that it is going forward very well indeed, and that great care is being taken in every detail. Then, all at once, pneumatic machines begin cutting into the new wall, digging the material out from among the interlacing steel rods, from which it is lowered to the ground and trucked away. Days pass, and there is a great, glaring open space. Then new forms are built, fresh concrete poured, and after some weeks of delay one could never tell where the wall had been renewed.

Some fault had been found in the material or construction, and the builders would not allow the weak spot to remain there to be a threat to the finished structure. The completed work must be solid, sure, and as perfect as careful work could make it.

Sometimes something like that has to be done in our lives or our work. A careless and unscrupulous workman would refuse to worry about it, perhaps let it go, assuming that it would not be noticed. Whether or not damage ever occurs there would always be the threat of it in a weak place there. The way of integrity for the builder of a material structure or of a life is to watch for weaknesses and potential breakdowns, and make them good before they endanger even the solidly constructed part of the work.

When a plan fails, or a hope breaks down, or a work in which much care and effort has been invested crumbles, it may be because a good mending, supporting, or replacement job, was not done at the right time and place.

A certain old dwelling house was renovated, some of the interior arrangements were changed, and a basement excavated. After some years a corner of the house began to settle and pull apart the wall above it. Ultimately the house was abandoned because it was no longer worth repairing. Excavators on the basement had dug under some of the foundations, weakened them, and done nothing about it. One thing like that endangers a whole structure.

Each one of us needs to be a Mr. Fixit, and a good one. If something is going wrong with a purpose, a family relationship, a marriage, a friendship, a lifework, whatever is necessary to mend it should be done, just as the builders did with the concrete wall. One should not proceed with life leaving a weak timber or a careless bit of work anywhere, and then have to go on through the years wondering just what day and hour it will collapse. Mend it right.

HAVE GOOD MODELS

EXPERT WORK is done from plans. A fine building starts from complete drawings. A picture begins with a sketch. A machine begins with a working model. This avoids haphazard, planless work, because it enables the worker to visualize what he intends to do. The actual construction may not be as good as the model, or it may excel the model as the work goes on; but the model is made and used, and it greatly increases the likelihood of a good piece of work.

For every important thing we do in life we need a good working model to keep the idea clear. It may be a material image or a mental concept, but in one

way or another it is needed. The trouble with only a mental concept is that we are so likely to fail to work it out in detail, or forget some details after we have worked them out.

It takes masterful ability and complete effort to form and use a mental concept for a model. James McNeil Whistler used to use them when he copied pictures, though most artists want the actual picture before them as they work.

Whistler did it the hard way, and thus proved his mastery. It was his habit when intending to copy a painting to go and sit before it long enough to study and memorize it in every detail, sometimes three or four hours. Then he would come away with every line, shadow, light, tint, and proportion of form in his mind and proceed to paint an exact copy of it from memory.

It would be well for all of us who are painting a very real picture called our lives, to be always watching for good models. Here is someone doing well at a certain kind of work, or one who has developed a strong mind and is using it well, or someone who has built an admirable character, or developed a sturdy religious faith, or cultivated a splendid set of associations, or anything else. Use their work as models. You can find others of the finest quality in history and biography. You need have no lack of them. They are numberless and varied. Study the wise, the good, and the successful, as Whistler sat silently by the hour studying pictures. Then, make them your own by reproducing them. You can vary them if you have good reason, but make them good. Model them right. It will be like it is executing the plans for a building or reproducing the working model of a machine. You may fall short of some points, equal others, and surpass still others. Do your best to make it right for you.

The beginning driver of cars should ride a few times with an expert and watch him. The beginning public speaker should read the speeches of the dead orators and listen to those of the living ones. The writer, the gardener, the carpenter, and all the rest, should begin by seeing how others do it who do it well. Those who want to live strong, useful, worthy lives, should closely observe others who have found out how. But one thing is sure, you will need something to go by, so have good models. In this also let us all join the express driver who every time he delivered a package faced the challenge, "Do It Right".

AFFIRMATION

I set rightness as my standard and take it for my model, both in the large things and in the little things of which the large ones often consist.

Blessings,

Your Instructor.